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Animal Bites

More than 1,100 Niagarans were
bitten by animals last year.
Page 2

A big sea change

Singer Alan Doyle says he still
gets nervous before every show.
Page 6

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Hills,
president
and CEO of
Goodwill
Niagara,
discuss the
opening of
a new store
location
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See story
on page 8.

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UPFRONT

Bite club: Animals sink teeth into 1,100 Niagarans

KARENA WALTER
Postmedia Network

If a Niagara resident is bitten by an animal, and the culprit isn't a dog or cat, chances are it's a bat.

The Niagara Region Public Health department investigated 44 cases of bat bites or contacts last year.

Of those, three bats tested positive for rabies.

"Unfortunately with a bat's bite, it's not the same as a bite from a dog, it's not as painful and sometimes you're not completely aware of it," said Bill Hunter, the department's manager of environmental health.

"Society tends to err on the side of caution if we can, proceed to send it for testing or recommend providing prophylaxis for the patient."

The bat reports were among 1,139 bites investigated by Niagara public health officials in 2015, slightly up from the year before.

Most were from domestic animals. Seven hundred and two bites were from dogs



Bats, shown here taking flight, are responsible for 44 bites in Niagara last year.

while 339 people felt the nip of a cat.

Thirteen people were bitten by rodents and one reported being gnawed by a rabbit or hare. Another 39 people suffered bites by "other" animals — while hiking most were bitten and couldn't determine the species, whether it be a raccoon, skunk, fox or other wild animal.

One bite, reported by a hospital, was categorized by the health department as "unknown" because the victim

was too inebriated to narrow down what or who did the biting.

No one has died of rabies in Niagara for almost 40 years. The last human case in Ontario was in 2012 in Toronto.

Hunter said until this past December when raccoon rabies were reported in Hamilton and Haldimand, bats were the biggest potential source of rabies transmission to humans in the area.

He said a huge dent has been made in wild animal

rabies in recent years with aerial baiting drops and catch and release programs by the Ministry of Natural Resources and other provincial agencies.

Bats, though, can't be vaccinated.

"No one has come up with a mechanism as yet so bats are something we're more concerned about," Hunter said. "In fact where we've had tests done in Niagara, bats have been the species where we found the rabies virus in recent years."

Most of the bat cases happen in older homes where bats have become residents, he said. A person wakes up with a bat in their bedroom and may or may not know if they've been bitten overnight.

Public health determines if there's reasonable contact before proceeding with a vaccine. It's recommended people who see bats in their home close the door of the room and call the humane society.

Physicians, police officer

TAKING A BITE OUT OF NIAGARA

Niagara Region
Public Health
Investigations of
animal bites in 2015

Dogs - 702

Cats - 339

Bats - 44

Rodents - 13

Lagomorphs (rabbits or hares) - 1

Other (something wild)

- 39

Unknown - 1

department quarantines the animal for 10 days, sometimes on the owner's property. Hunter said if the animal is alive after 10 days, it means it wasn't rabid, because biting is a phase at the end of the rabies illness.

In 2015, 745 animals, mostly dogs and cats, were quarantined in Niagara. Another eight animals were dead by the time public health investigated and were sent out for testing.

In past years the department has investigated bites by horses, alpacas, deer and squirrels.

When it comes to wild animals, Hunter said it's best to admire them from a distance.

They can feel threatened and will respond by biting and scratching.

"Exercise caution, particularly with animals in the wild," Hunter said. "They may look cute but they're not in a Disney film."

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Syrian refugees excited to welcome family to Port Colborne

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

After a tiresome journey, and almost a month apart, Belal Musa Agha, are reunited with his brother.

Belal, his wife and two children arrived from Lebanon as Syrian refugees on Jan. 1. With

the help of members from St. Brendan and St. James Anglican church they were able to relocate to Canada.

Belal's brother Abdul Raman Musa Agha, along with his wife and children, were to arrive in Toronto on Saturday and travel to Port Colborne Sunday.

The church sponsored Belal's brother and his family in hopes to keep the two families together to support each other.

Donna Kalalief, co-ordinator for the refugee project, said everyone in the congregation is excited to meet the new arrivals. She said Belal

will accompany members of the church to pick up his brother and family in Toronto on Sunday.

Kalalief said everyone is happy and excited and the family is "very gracious — very thankful."

Raman, his wife Hoda Al Tamas, and four children had

to wait to travel because Hoda recently gave birth to a baby boy, Zayd Musa Agha, on Nov. 11.

Belal will also welcome his nephew Omar Musa Agha, 7, and twin nephew and niece, Hamza Musa Agha and Tala Musa Agha, 5.

Kalalief said the apart-

ment is ready for the family to settle in and she is looking forward to continuing to work with both families. "We've learned so much from them. It's been such an enlightening experience ... very positive," Kalalief said.

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LOCAL NEWS

'It's a child's life that is at risk'

RAY SPITERI
Postmedia Network

Most drivers know what "STOP" means, but some continue to disobey the law, particularly when it comes to school buses.

In recent weeks, numerous residents in the McLeod Road and Kalar Road area of Niagara Falls have contacted police with concerns about vehicles not stopping for school buses when students are boarding and exiting.

Many of the students included pre-school-aged children leaving and returning to a day-care centre in the area.

Niagara Regional Police attended the area for a traffic investigation for a day last week.

During that morning and afternoon, police charged four drivers for failing to stop for a school bus.

The infraction included a \$490 fine and six demerit points.

Police said one of the drivers was a novice-class G2 license holder who will now be subjected to a licence review by the Ministry of Transportation and suspension upon conviction.

Police said all four drivers made no attempt to slow down, driving past the bus as it was loading and unloading children.

By law, drivers are required to stop their vehicle in any direction when a school bus is stopped with its overhead flashing red lights working. Drivers can proceed when the lights are turned off and when it's safe to do so.

A photograph showing a yellow school bus stopped at a red octagonal stop sign. A person wearing a red jacket and carrying a backpack is walking across the street in front of the bus. A white car is in the foreground, partially obscuring the bus. The scene is on a city street with other vehicles and bare trees in the background.

MIKE DIBATTISTA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Motorists stop for a school bus in Niagara Falls. Niagara Regional Police are reminding drivers they are required to stop their vehicle in any direction when a school bus is stopped with its lights activated.

Lori Powell, executive director with Niagara Student Transportation Services, said motorists passing stopped school buses is a "big issue" they frequently hear about from bus drivers.

The organization provides transportation services for the students of the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

"We hear complaints from

bus drivers, whether it's blow-bys or a car jamming on their brakes at the last minute," Powell said.

"It's a child's life that is at risk. We need to make sure we're alert when we're driving and paying attention to the task at hand."

She said there have been a number of "near misses" where a bus driver had to lay on the horn to get a student's attention to stop crossing the

road, and to get the attention of a motorist.

Powell said bus drivers are trained to follow specific safety practices, such as making sure it's safe to stop a bus and let a student on or off. They will also give students signals to alert them to their

She said the organization goes to elementary schools for student safety training.

While school buses gen-

erally stop on both sides of the road, there are situations designated for one-side stops because there's a history of problems in a particular area.

The McLeod Road and Kalar Road area is one of those situations.

"We've partnered with the police before to monitor traffic," Powell said. "We need to be cautious in and around school buses."

PEOPLE CHARGED ACROSS NIAGARA

2013: 10
2014: 12
2015: 12

In 2012, the stretch of Kalar Road between McLeod Road and Lundy's Lane was designated a Community Safety Zone. The area is home to several schools, parks, community groups and residences.

Designating an area as a Community Safety Zone allows for traffic violation fines to be doubled.

"When these incidents occur, they can be very attention-getting in that the law is very clear and young children's lives are put at risk," NRP spokesman Const. Phil Gavin said.

“These incidents are further compounded when they are impacted with issues such as distracted driving or poor weather conditions.”

Gavin said it’s not “terribly common” for Niagara motorists to be charged for failing to stop for a school bus.

He said 12 people were charged across the region in 2015, 12 in 2014 and 10 in 2013.

"We will respond to neighbourhood complaints and crossing guard/bus driver complaints," Gavin said.

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[illegible]

Stigmatizing smokers won't help them butt out

Quitting smoking is good. Stigmatizing people who smoke isn't.

There has been a significant decline in the rates of cigarette smoking over the past few decades, which can be attributed to a combination of strategies including taxes, laws, public education and de-normalization.

De-normalizing cigarette smoking has reduced its social acceptability by constructing the depictions of smoking as cool or glamorous by tobacco companies.

However, while some people who smoke report the de-normalization of smoking has increased their intentions to quit, many others have experienced lower self-esteem and feelings of shame, guilt or hopelessness, which can hinder an attempt to quit or push them to try to hide their smoking.

The social stigma can be even worse for people who smoke and live in poverty.

Nicotine is highly addictive, both physically and psychologically. For every person you may know who has quit "cold turkey," there are countless numbers



LORI
KLEINSMITH

more unable to maintain a quit attempt.

Quitting smoking is not impossible, but it is definitely not easy, especially the longer a person has been smoking. Research has shown it can take 10 or more attempts before success is maintained long term.

Friends and family may offer well-intentioned advice to a person who smokes, thinking this will motivate them to quit. However, this can often backfire and lead to further anxiety, self-blame and inaction.

The term "smoker" itself is a stigmatizing label that places blame on the person, rather than acknowledging the fact smoking is a complex addiction, not simply a lifestyle choice. Smoking is often a coping mechanism for stress and other difficult emotions, and can quickly become entrenched in a person's life.

The last few generations of youths have grown up with mass media campaigns and talks with the school health nurse warning about the dangers of smoking.

We know smoking is harmful to our health. These well-intentioned messages may have contributed to fewer youths taking up smoking, but we have not eliminated smoking altogether. This is because behaviour changes are influenced by much more than just knowledge.

If we all followed the health messages taught in school or heard on television, everyone would be eating five to seven daily servings of fruits and vegetables, sleeping eight hours a night and exercising regularly. We know this is not the case.

I am not in any way condoning the use of cigarettes, and we must do all we can to prevent people from starting smoking and to support people who are trying to quit. I am suggesting a less stigmatizing and more empathetic approach is needed if we truly want to help.

■ Avoid dirty looks, derogatory comments and guilt-inducing scare tactics. Choose your words more carefully and

with sensitivity. Labels are for packages, not people. For example, speak about "a person who smokes" rather than "a smoker." A "dirty habit" is actually an addiction.

■ Change the way you think about people who smoke and see them as human beings with the same feelings, emotions and struggles that you experience. Think about your own personal challenges to make permanent changes in areas of your life. Offer compassion, not guilt.

■ Ask a person how you can help, rather than offering up what you think is useful advice to quit smoking. Be encouraging. Words can sometimes hurt more than they can help.

Let's all do our part to help foster a more positive, caring and supportive environment that does not continue to isolate or marginalize people who smoke. Understanding the challenges of quitting smoking and helping to build the confidence and support when they are ready can go a long way.

—Lori Kleinsmith is a health promoter and smoke cessation counsellor at Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne.

Thanks to God for the talents of Bowie, Rickman and Frey

REV. THOMAS PARTH
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

For people of a certain generation, the first weeks of 2016 came with a few shocks.

People my age and a few years older than me were hit with the news of the deaths of a few celebrities who have been influential or at least quite well known as we've grown up.

On Jan. 10, David Bowie died. He was a singer, songwriter, musician, performer, producer, actor, painter — he was innovative in all his pursuits.

His music was experimental in style throughout his career. He took on various stage personas over the years, some of them defying gender boundaries. In interviews in the '70s he declared himself to be gay and bisexual, then in the '80s saying he was in fact heterosexual. But his earlier statements and the personas he played made him a beacon and inspiration and liberator and triumph for gay people.

Spiritually, he considered Buddhism in his younger years. In the '90s he said he had an "unfading belief in the unquestionable existence of God." He wanted his second marriage to be sanctified by God in a church.

At a tribute concert for his friend Freddie Mercury, Bowie knelt on the stage and prayed the Lord's Prayer. He said he could never quite become an atheist because a belief in the existence of God was always holding on.

His death from cancer just two days after his 69th birthday was a shock and surprise for many of his fans, who didn't even know he was ill because he kept his illness a secret.

Four days after Bowie's death, on Jan. 14, actor Alan Rickman died, also at the age of 69. He was an actor who performed in a variety of roles from the serious to the silly. I knew him from *Die Hard*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Galaxy Quest*, *Love Actually* and all of the Harry Potter movies.

I think he'll probably be best known for his role as Severus Snape in the Harry Potter movies. I hadn't read the books before seeing the movies so I didn't know anything of his character. He played so well a professor who seemed so evil. But there was something underlying the character that seemed likeable, even in his badness. It's only later that we see his redemption as it finally becomes evident that he is not evil at all.

Soon after Rickman's death, fans created a makeshift memorial under the Plaque 9th sign at London's King's Cross station.

Another four days later, on Jan. 18, singer and musician Glenn Frey died at the age of 67. He was a founding member, singer and guitarist in the rock band Eagles.

It seems his younger years as a musician were filled with the typical excesses one frequently associates with the rock 'n' roll lifestyle. Eagles became one of the world's best-selling groups of all time. The songs they wrote and recorded, some of which Frey sang, were like a soundtrack to the 1970s — *Take It Easy*, *Peaceful Easy Feeling*, *Tequila Sunrise*, *Lyn's Eyes*, *New Kid in Town* and *Hearts of Fire*.

A friend of mine wondered about the outpouring of grief over these deaths. He made a reference to an "unhealthy celebrity-focused culture."

I'd be willing to grant there may be some truth to that. But a lot of what I saw and heard from fans wasn't just celebrity adulation. People were talking about their art and what it meant in their lives. People were not remembering them as celebrities known only for their fame, they were being recalled as artists known for the music they made

and the roles they inhabited.

Artistic ability is a gift from God. The Bible says we are created in God's image. There's no clear agreement about what that "image" of God is. But God is creative. God created and creates and we've been endowed with creative abilities as well. Part of what it means to be made in the image of God could be our creativity.

I put a quote from a David Bowie song on our church sign last week. His first hit song *Space Oddity* has the line, "The stars look very different today."

For some of us, stars are stars — tiny dots of light in the night sky. But an artist can help us see them in a different way. Van Gogh's painting *The Starry Night* shows us stars like most of us have probably never seen them. Artists can show us things in very different ways.

David Bowie, Alan Rickman and Glenn Frey were given their gifts, their artistic talents, and they used them creatively to impact many who saw or heard what they did. They are gone but thankfully much of their artistic output remains. Thanks be to God for the artists in our world who open us up to new ways of seeing, hearing, thinking and feeling.

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NPCA floating new Welland River floodplain

WAYNE CAMPBELL
Special to Postmedia Network

More than 5,000 households within 500 metres of the Welland River will soon receive a letter.

In it, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority will outline the agency's new floodplain mapping strategy and policy framework.

In September, it plans to formally approve revised floodplain lines and policies.

They will involve three sets of lines on maps of the Welland River from the Blinbrook dam in Hamilton to the Niagara River.

The maps will indicate, based on risk of flooding, where construction would be permitted, modified or prohibited.

The maps will follow a colour code of green, yellow and red indicating no risk to high risk.

NPCA chief administrative officer Carm D'Angelo said in an interview that a group of stakeholders — the watershed floodplain committee — suggested the direct mailing to property owners.

NPCA plans to back it up with news releases, advertising, website postings, social media and four town

hall meetings, in Chippawa, Welland, Wellandport and Caistor Centre.

The 5,000 properties line the river in Hamilton, Halldimand, West Lincoln, Wainfleet, Pelham, Welland and Niagara Falls.

The floodplain committee, which is made up of NPCA staff and board members along with property owners, representatives of municipalities and other interested parties, said direct mailing is a good way to engage the public in the process.

The strategy contrasts an earlier effort to revise the official 1985 major-storm floodlines for the watershed.

In 2010, NPCA approved new lines. However, it did not tell anyone.

Farmers, homeowners and developers discovered them when they applied for building permits.

The surprise changed led to a stormy two-year confrontation.

Individuals, property-owner groups, developers and municipalities questioned the validity of the floodlines, hired experts and threatened legal action.

The new lines were dropped.

"We want to do it right this time with as broad a public consultation as possible," said NPCA chair Bruce Timms, a regional councillor for St. Catharines.

Compared to 1985, the authority has much better data based on current technology and knows how much infrastructure has changed along the river, he said.

After problems following 2010, "the community has to be confident that the latest data is considered in constructing new lines," Timms said.

This time NPCA spent a year on planning and mapping research before introducing the process to the public.

It is also working under more recent provincial guidelines.

As it has since 1959, the authority must ensure conservation of habitats, watersheds and natural features along with protection of people and property from

flooding. Now, it must also consider climate change and its effects on the watersheds.

"Most people get it" said D'Angelo about climate change.

Recent flooding of neighbourhoods in Calgary, Burlington and Stoney Creek, along with provincial and national discussions about climate change, has raised awareness of risks, he said.

While the Welland River may not surge with flash floods, it does carry its own forms of rising waters from rain and runoff.

Steve Miller, supervisor of water resources who monitors river flow, said "the Welland River is one of most complicated watercourses in North America."

It is affected by the Ontario Power Generation canal in Niagara Falls that slashes Welland River water back upstream each day. The river flows through two siphons under branches of the Welland Canal in Welland. And it has the

pressures of rural farmland runoff and urban residential stormwater.

Miller said NPCA oversees 140 watercourses. Half of them have floodplain mapping, especially if they flow through built-up communities. That's where there's potential impact from flooding.

"It is more like a tidal basin as opposed to a watercourse," said Miller.

D'Angelo said anyone who wishes to attend the four public meetings on the floodplain lines is invited. They need not be within 500 metres of the river.

The 500-metre band on each side of the river serves as "a study area," he said.

The actual floodplain lines along the river will vary depending on natural conditions, height of banks, land elevations, structures and other features.

The people who attend the meetings tend to be tuned into the river and provide informed opinions, D'Angelo said.

NPCA TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority has set up four town hall meetings to explain new floodplain mapping along the Welland River.

They will be held in Chippawa, Welland, Caistor Centre and Wellandport from 6 to 8 p.m. with a presentation at 6:30.

The schedule is:
■ Wednesday, Feb. 3, at Chippawa Willoughby Memorial Arena (meeting room) 3000 Sodom Rd., Niagara Falls

■ Tuesday, Feb. 16, Rivestone Event Centre 414 River Rd., Welland;

■ Thursday, Feb. 25, Caistor Community Centre, 1683 Abingdon Rd., West Lincoln;

■ Monday, Feb. 29, Wellandport Community Centre, 5042 Carborough Road (Reg. Road 63), West Lincoln.



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It's been a big sea change for Alan Doyle

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Being nervous has served Alan Doyle well.

The burly Newfoundland-born singer jokes he always felt a bit of unease during his 20 years with Great Big Sea, wondering when the ride would come to an end. When it finally did at the end of 2013, his schedule — and life — was suddenly wide open.

"Nothing scares me like an empty calendar," says Doyle, on the line from Los Angeles.

He has spent two years filling it. With a book (*Where I Belong*). With an album (*So Let's Go*, his second solo release). With constant touring.

As Doyle says, he never knows when it'll all be taken away.

"I'm constantly worried that someone's gonna come knock on the door and go 'Wait a minute, you don't know how to write a book?' I'm going to go 'I know!'"

Even on a rare night to relax, his ears are open. Doyle had plans to chill on New Year's Eve until organizers of the annual

Niagara Falls concert at Queen Victoria Park gave him a ring.

The show was scrambling to find acts after Global pulled out of broadcasting it. Doyle had played the concert three previous times with Great Big Sea ... would he do one more?

He called his band Beautiful Gypsies, talked them into working on New Year's Eve, and made the trip.

"It was awesome," he says. "It was a great night. It's a cool place to be, and has a sense of occasion about it."

With the start of 2016 comes another tour, starting Jan. 27 at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines — which he'll do while polishing off new songs to be released next month. And writing his second book, also coming out next year.

"People always ask me if I get nervous still, and I say 'Every single night.' The night that I stop being nervous, that's the night where it will definitely suck." The only thing that keeps him going forward ... is the constant awareness that I could shag it all at any second.

Continued on next page

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Enjoying success on his own

From previous page

"Most creative people I know are like that. They know they have to give it 110 per cent every time just to buy themselves a chance to stay afloat."

Great Big Sea ended with the departure of co-founder Sean McCann. Doyle and the group's other co-founder, Bob Hallett, pondered going on, "but we couldn't find a way."

"Rather than do something unamiable, we said, 'Well, let's let it rest.' The last thing in the world I wanted ... was to have the last thing that Bob and Sean and I did together (be) a racket. We're not doing that."

He felt "relief" that it ended on good terms, knowing he could focus on "what comes next."

Not that it wasn't nerve-racking. "It's especially spooky to stand on stage without the weight of a 20-year ship behind you," he says. "But it's also very rewarding after to see that people are still interested in hearing what I'm up to."

"It's been one of the most rewarding things of my professional life that in the last two years I've discovered time and time again that people are interested in hearing me out of Great Big Sea. I couldn't tell you how grateful I am for that, and how lucky I feel."



CHRISTOPHER KING / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Alan Doyle will open his latest tour later this month in St. Catharines.

No matter who he plays with, Doyle aims for the same thing every show.

"My tours are still designed to give people the greatest night of their lives," he says. "When someone buys a ticket, they're leaving with their legs wobbly and their throats sore."

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The year is 1932 and Fitzwilliam, a fun loving British aristocrat, has fallen on some tough luck. After almost every club in England has banned him from entry his uncle, The Earl of Dunsborough must send him away to one of the colonies. Canada is his destination and despite his protests the job of Canadian Mountie awaits him in his new small town life. Unfortunately, the small town of Girty Dulch is full of bandits and criminals and Fitzwilliam must use his wit and charm to save the tiny prairie town from ruin.

June 8th to 12th

Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8n/e	9n/e	10e	11n/e	12n



Comedy by ALLANA HARKIN

What to do when your client has even less curb appeal than his house? Decisive, simply, add a touch of 'feng shui' and watch the sparks fly! Add a blocked writer, a guy with perfect hair, an ex-wife and an incredibly determined realtor ... what could possibly go wrong? The comedy is sure, the characters well drawn and the circumstances? Hilarious!

June 29th to July 3rd

Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
2n/e	3n/e	1e	2n/e	3m



Comedy/Farce by

MARCIA KASH & DOUGLAS E. HUGHES **World Premiere**

Local hero Raymond Bissim is running in the federal election, and has come back to his hometown of Port Walsmley to make a major campaign announcement that just might put him over the top. Meanwhile, the incumbent's running against him has sent a couple of politicians to town to prevent Raymond from making that announcement—by any means necessary. The showdown between the two camps and the bumbling henchmen will have you laughing all night long!

July 20th to 24th

Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
20n/e	21n/e	22e	23n/e	24m



Comedy by ROBIN HAWDON

An appalling situation. A bridegroom wakes on his wedding morning in his own bridal suite, with his bride-to-be about to arrive any moment, and finds a strange girl in bed beside him. The only way out of the dilemma is to persuade the best man to pretend that the girl is his girlfriend. By the time the bride's parents and the honeymoon staff get on the set, the chaos reaches nuclear proportions!

August 10th to 14th

Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
10n/e	11n/e	12e	13n/e	14m

o=Opening Night m=2 pm matinee e=8 pm evening

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LOCAL NEWS

Goodwill coming to Port Colborne

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

As Goodwill Toronto closes 16 stores it runs, Goodwill Niagara remains unaffected — in fact a new store is set to open in April.

"We are open for business, we are good, we are thriving," said Laura Hills, president and CEO of Goodwill Niagara.

The cash flow crisis impacting Goodwill Toronto won't have an impact in Niagara due to the local organization's structuring.

Hills said the organization works like a "franchise." Each Goodwill is autonomous and has its own board of directors. Goodwill Niagara has five stores in the region: Two in Welland and St. Catharines and one in Niagara Falls.

The sixth store to open in

Port Colborne will be the first in that city. It will be large at about 9,000 square feet.

"We are still here, we are growing. Watch for us in Port Colborne," Hills said with a chuckle.

Artan Milaj, vice-president of Canadian Airport Workers Union which represents Goodwill Toronto employees, said in a news release workers there didn't get advance notice from the company.

"The 450 workers are now suddenly without jobs, which is devastating on its own. But Goodwill stores also help a lot of low-income people with community programming and affordable shopping," Milaj said.

"We need to get these stores open and our members back on the job," he said in the release.

According to Goodwill Ni-

agara's 2014-15 annual report, more than 1,000 people in Niagara were provided with services and job training in 2015 through the organization. The report stated more than 260,000 people supported Goodwill Niagara by shopping at its stores.

Goodwill Niagara is always looking for donations. Without the donations the local organization cannot do business.

"We do get most of our funding from our stores. We do have the support from different levels of government, but we don't require a lot of funding from them," Hills said.

What makes Goodwill Niagara different from Goodwill Toronto are the programs and services provided. Hills said the organization provides affordable housing and a few programs that help build the community.

Goodwill Niagara runs a program called Constructing Our Future. The program is a six-month project for youth to develop personal and professional skills. Participants are offered the chance to gain work experience in a placement.

"Almost everyone leaving the program is getting a job of some kind. We get kids who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. They couldn't finish school for whatever reason. They have fallen through the cracks. We teach them life skills," Hills said.

Bob Romeo, director of marketing, said the organization employs more than 100 people in Niagara. He said many of those people went through the Constructing Our Future program.



Open house for Welland Canal fallen workers memorial

The community is invited to check out plans for the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial.

Two open houses, in St. Catharines and Port Colborne, will feature the plans, designers from Derek Revington Studio Inc. and members of the memorial's task force.

The memorial is being built to honour 137 men who died during the construction of the Welland Canal.

An open house in Port Colborne will be held in city hall council chambers at 66 Charlotte St. on Monday, Feb. 8, from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

A second open house in St. Catharines will run that day from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre at 1932 Welland Canals Parkway.

The task force continues to fundraise for the memorial which will be built in 2017.

To view the design or make a contribution go to www.catharines.ca/CanalWorkersMemorial.



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Goodwill store on Welland Ave. in St. Catharines. Niagara's Goodwill stores aren't affected by Toronto's closures.

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LOCAL NEWS

Skyway crash reminder of dangers police face

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

They sit as silent reminders — spartan, blue signs on bridges across the QEW in Niagara. They honour OPP officers killed in the line of duty on the highway.

Coast. Charles Mercier's name is on the Niagara Street overpass in St. Catharines. He was directing traffic at a construction site on Sept. 30, 1999, when his cruiser was struck by a truck driver who fell asleep.

Const. Michael Gula's name is on the McLeod Road overpass in Niagara Falls. A hit-and-run driver struck him from behind during a traffic stop near the bridge on April 2, 1996.

Const. John Gregovsk's name is on the CN rail overpass at Sand Plant Hill in Niagara Falls. A tractor-trailer fatally struck him on Jan. 4, 1989, at the base of the nearby Garden City Skyway. The crash also killed a passenger from a disabled vehicle who was sitting in Gregovsk's cruiser.

The officers died years apart, but within a few kilometres from each other along the same stretch of road.

Tuesday, there was another close call. Paramedics took OPP Sgt. Scott Whitehorse of the Niagara detachment to the hospital with injuries after a vehicle struck his OPP cruiser on the skyway.

"When I was heading to the skyway, I looked over, and it brought back the memories," Sgt. Jan Idrzenga of the Niagara detachment said. "Some of us, who have been around a while, knew the officers that were killed. At least, in this case, I knew (Whitehorse) was OK because he was talking on the radio. Whitehorse stopped to assist the driver of a disabled vehicle in the Toronto-bound lanes of the QEW bridge at the border of St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake Tuesday at noon, Sgt. Kerry Schmidt of the OPP, said. A tow-truck was also at the scene.

Whitehorse activated his emergency lights and called the Ministry of Transportation for crash trucks, blocking vehicles equipped with energy-absorbing barriers, Schmidt said.

Continued on next page

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Move over law not new

From previous page

"It can be frightening situation — especially on the skyway," Schmidt said. "There is no shoulder up there. The officer is exposed to the elements. Drivers may be tempted to take in the view of the lake and the city."

"But if a car is blocking a lane with just its four-way flashers on, we don't have a lot of options. We have to get up there and help."

"We activate our emergency strobes to warn other motorists. Had the car not smashed into the cruiser, he may have hit the disabled vehicle, or the motorist as he was walking outside the vehicle. It's very dangerous. We end up using our car as a cushion."

Two right lanes on the skyway were closed through the early afternoon because of the crash.

Whitehorn is out of the hospital, Izdzenska said.

"It is minor injuries, but he is extremely sore," Izdzenska said. "He is also very lucky. We were fortunate it was a car not a tractor-trailer."

Police charged the motorist that hit the cruiser with failure to move over and careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act. There is a \$490 fine as well as

three demerit points for disobeying the "move over" law.

The Highway Traffic Act requires motorists approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with red or red/blue lights flashing, on the same side of the road, to slow down. If there are multiple lanes in the same direction of travel, the driver must vacate the lane adjacent to the emergency vehicle if it can be done safely.

The move over law isn't new. Media outlets have been reporting on it for years. The province includes a notice about the law with every licence or plate renewal letter.

Only since last June did legislation come into effect in Ontario requiring the same driver behaviour in the presence of tow-truck operators.

Izdzenska said he is frustrated. He said he has almost run out of words to remind the public about the importance of paying attention to the road conditions and obeying the "move over" law.

"We had the lane closed at the base of the skyway," Izdzenska said. "The driver is looking up the skyway and with the elevation and can see a way ahead. I don't understand how someone couldn't see what was going on."

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Deposit too big for bank

KARENA WALTER
Postmedia Network

Newly-arrived armchairs, dressers and tables for refugees and other low-income residents are stacked close together like puzzle pieces

at Niagara Furniture Bank.

The charity isn't wasting any of its precious floor space in its downtown St. Catharines warehouse.

Yet a large donation of hotel furniture — greatly needed to meet demand —

was threatening to burst its seams.

It was a fortunate problem to have and one ultimately solved by teamwork between the furniture bank, Niagara Refugee Assistance Committee and the Pen

Centre, which is donating 10,000 square feet of temporary space.

"The Pen Centre giving us space is critical," said Niagara Furniture Bank executive director Gillian Kemp last week, standing in the

charity's 5,000-square-foot home at 53 Ontario St.

"We'll probably fill up here as much as we can with dressers, then move into the Pen Centre."

The collaboration between the groups could not have been more timely. With Niagara expecting 200 to 300 Syrian refugees by the end of February, furnishings were needed.

Jeff Burch, executive director of Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre and a member of the Niagara Refugee Assistance Committee, was working with the furniture bank to take in donations for refugees.

About the same time, the furniture bank received a giant offer of gently-used furniture from a Niagara hotel group that wishes to remain anonymous. The hotel group had furniture from 650 hotel rooms that were being re-decorated and would otherwise go to a landfill. Niagara Furniture Bank didn't want to turn down the donation, but didn't have enough room for items estimated to take up 10,000 square feet of space.

Burch contacted the Pen Centre, which offered up an empty space at the back of the mall in what was formerly London Arms/Kahuna.

"We were glad we could step up and assist," said Pen Centre marketing manager Rick Woodward. "We never say no when someone asks for help and in this instance we were glad we could cooperate and hopefully make life a little easier for those arriving in our community."

HOW TO HELP

More information about Niagara Furniture Bank website: niagarafurniturebank.com, phone: 905-682-8371 or email: office@niagarafurniturebank.com
More information about Niagara Refugee Assistance Committee: www.folk-arts.ca
Financial donations for refugees: <http://gotfund.me/syrianassist>

Woodward said the space had a broken garage door which the Pen Centre replaced to allow the furniture bank to easily access to the area.

The hotel donation is more than needed for Syrian refugees coming to Niagara, Burch said. It's expected to help not only refugees coming to other parts of Ontario but other low-income Niagara residents as well.

"It will be for sure serve refugee families and others in need in Niagara," Burch said, adding he's had requests from Toronto for furniture for its influx of refugees. "There's needs in other areas."

Niagara Furniture Bank serves between 500 and 600 families and individuals a year. It doesn't assess need, leaving that up to referral agencies such as Canadian Mental Health Association, YWCA shelters and transitional housing and Community Care.

Continued on next page

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LOCAL NEWS

Delivery fees apply

From previous page

"We figure they've already told their story — they don't need to tell it to us," Kemp said.

Clients are charged delivery for the gently-used donated items. An individual can outfit their entire home for \$225 while a family of more than one person can do so for \$340. The charity also delivers two items for someone in need for \$95.

"Without the hotels we wouldn't be able to meet demand," Kemp said, adding the furniture bank constantly runs out of end tables, small tables and dressers.

Tables are packed in the warehouse with their legs



JULIE JOSEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Gillian Kemp, executive director of Niagara Furniture Bank, stands among furniture donated by a large Niagara hotel chain for the refugees who are due to arrive and other newcomers to the region. The furniture bank will be receiving furniture from 650 hotel rooms, which the Pen Centre has agreed to help store.

removed to save space, while chairs are piled high to the ceiling.

A few pieces of the newly donated hotel furniture were

unloaded at Niagara Furniture Bank on Tuesday but Kemp said volunteers are needed to help move the rest of the furniture from the hotel

rooms to the Pen Centre. A schedule is being worked out so that recruitment of volunteers can start.

Kemp said having the

space means bought time to deplete the stock.

"It was happenstance they had a space to give us," she said.

"The Pen Centre (people) are really the stars of the show."

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LOCAL NEWS



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MORE DIMITRA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Danny Stabile, produce manager at Lococo Wholesale in Niagara Falls, is pictured next to cauliflower, which in recent days had been selling for \$8 a head.

Pricey produce stings shoppers

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Veggie lovers have suffered from sticker shock recently over the rising cost of food — a head of cauliflower, for instance, has pushed toward the \$10 level.

But people shouldn't panic, says Lou

Greco, sales manager at Lococo Wholesale in Niagara Falls.

He said earlier this month, Lococo's was purchasing cauliflower for between \$80 and \$90 a case. This week, the company is buying it for \$25 to \$30.

Continued on next page



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LOCAL NEWS

Unfavourable weather and weak loonie have sent prices soaring

From previous page

Greco said lettuce, tomato and zucchini are a few vegetables that have increased in price.

"The cost of food is going up, and the exchange rate has become an issue," he said.

Greco said the poor dollar exchange between Canada and the United States is having an impact on prices not only of vegetables, but fruit, meat and seafood, too.

Lococo's produce manager Danny Stabile agreed the U.S. exchange rate is affecting prices. He said almost on a daily basis some items will fluctuate in price by nearly \$10 a crate.

There are two main factors impacting the cost of produce, said Dave Wilkes, senior vice-president government relations and grocery division for the Retail Council of Canada.

First is the U.S. exchange rate.

Since Canada is a "winner country," Wilkes said, it doesn't grow that produce at this time of year so has to purchase it from the United States and Mexico. That hurts, he said, because Canada is paying in U.S. prices.

"This is a fundamental reality of the grocery industry, that when we see declines in the currency it affects the costs," he said.

The second factor is climate.

Some of the items affected by weather include potatoes, harvest vegetables and salad vegetable items.

"There had been very cool weather in California a couple weeks ago, which really affected the production in that region. There have been some challenges in Mexico, there was freezing and cooling that affected items like tomatoes," Wilkes said.

Krisy Sacco, supervisor at Harvest Barn in St. Catharines, said the price difference from last week is quite a jump. Last week cauliflower was being sold for \$7.99 a head — this week it's \$2.99 a head.

"People were looking at the price and felt they needed to splurge," she said of the high-priced items.

Sacco said she wasn't buying cauliflower when prices were so high, but now she is and she's happy about the price falling.

Restaurants are also being impacted by rising costs and have to keep a closer eye on what vegetables they include on the menu.

Don Marco's, an Italian restaurant in Welland, has had to limit its use of cauliflower and change side dishes.

"Usually we monitor meat and seafood, but in the past six months we've had to monitor the produce as well," said Rob Pala, who volunteers at Don Marco's, which is owned by his nephew Marco Ventresca.

With the higher price of most produce, Pala said he never thought the restaurant would have to watch their sides, but now he has to watch prices and adjust.

For New Year's Eve, Pala and restaurant staff chose not to do a strawberry dish due to cost.

He said this year it was about \$7 for a quart of strawberries, whereas usually it's about \$2.50.

Pala said if rising food costs continue, staff will have to review menu prices.

He said he enjoys preparing cauliflower at home — but he no longer due to its cost.

He no longer buys other vegetables because they, too, have become more expensive.

Rise Above, a vegan restaurant in St. Catharines, changes its menu seasonally and has been able to avoid using cauliflower.

Kitchen manager Heather Dowling said produce price fluctuations are a large part of menu design.

If certain items are expensive, she will structure the menu to have less or remove it altogether. "Cost inflation is something that we pay attention to and try to get ahead of so

that our prices can stay reasonable," she said.

Greco, from Lococo's, said "this year has been

more volatile ... no one can predict the weather or the yield farmers might have."

Asked if cauliflower is the

new specialty item, like caviar, Greco said, "it's not a fair example."

"Today it could be aspar-

agus. Next week it could be broccoli."

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UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION LINE – NOTICE OF ROAD CLOSURE For the Niagara Region Wind Project, FWRN

Project Name Niagara Region Wind Project (the "Project")
Project Location Within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario
Notice Dated At Haldimand County and Niagara Region, the 17th of January 2016.

Niagara Region Wind Corporation, now FWRN LP (the "Proponent"), are engaging in a renewable energy project for which a Renewable Energy Approval ("REA") was issued by the Ministry of the Environment (now the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change) on November 21, 2014.

Project Description

The Project is located within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario. The Project will consist of 77 wind turbine generators, step-up transformer, electrical collector lines, a transmission line, two transformer substations, turbine access roads and construction staging areas. The Project will have a total maximum nameplate capacity of up to 230 MW.

Underground Transmission Line – Road Closure CANBOROUGH ROAD:

Vault and duct bank installations, along with underground trenching will begin on Canborough Road, between Collier Road to Regional Road 45.

The road closure will be from: Jan. 25 to Feb. 2, 2016.

Detours for this road closure are: Wellandport Road to Regional Road 45 (see diagram).



Please note that public services (i.e. mail delivery, garbage pick-up, school buses, etc.) may be disrupted during this time.

If you have any obstructions in the right-of-way near your property (e.g. fences, private gas lines, gardens, tiles, electrical lines), please contact Shiloh Berriman (contact information below).

Project Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the Project's construction phase, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

NIAGARA REGION WIND PROJECT CONTACT	GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION
Shiloh Berriman Email: shiloh.berriman@nrcn.ca Cell: 289-683-2563	General Number: 819-363-6491 Toll Free: 1-844-363-6491 Project email: info@nrcw.ca Project website: www.nrcw.ca

LOCAL NEWS

New CAO sees Welland's potential

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Gary Long has been in Welland for less than a week, but he already sees a lot of potential in the city.

Since starting his new job as chief administrative officer, Long has spent his time touring city facilities and meeting with staff and councillors. And he plans to spend the next few months getting to know his new coworkers, as well as the people he was hired to serve.

"I want to take the next 60 days to build relationships with the mayor and council, city staff, residents and key community stakeholders," Long said.

But a look out the window of his office on the second floor of the Welland Civic Square is enough to inspire ideas about what can be accomplished in the city.

"I think the mayor and council and myself have aspirations. We want to continue to do the good things that we're doing, but also capitalize and exploit opportu-

nities. We're very optimistic and positive about our future, and there's a lot of work to be done," he said, while taking in the view of the recreational canal and Merritt Island.

"All you need to do is kind of look out the window to dream out loud as to the possibilities and the opportunities. They're tremendous."

He said reaching those possibilities is a matter of building partnership between city hall, and the community.

"I see it as city building. And part of that is addressing and anticipating challenges, and working through those challenges and clearing the way and capitalize and exploit the opportunities," he said.

"We can spend time mired in the muck and digging in the weeds, or we can spend a lot of our resources and energies on strategic issues and some of those projects and initiatives that I would characterize as city building."

Long is well aware of the economic devastation the city has faced during the past decade, but he's also noticed that Welland residents are resilient.

Prior to his arrival, he said the city has been aggressively working to diversify

and restructure the city's economy, and that's something the city needs to continue doing.

"We can't just cross our fingers and hope for the best," he said. "We really need to be proactive and aggressive."

Looking forward, he said there are a lot of reasons for Welland residents to be optimistic and positive.

"We have the programs and services and facilities in place that are important for our residents, and will also help us attract new residents and investments in the future," he said.

"I think we're well positioned for the future."

Continued on Page 20

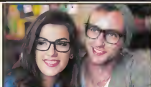


Welland's new CAO Gary Long is making plans for the city.

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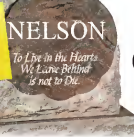
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The laser was developed in 1984 and the first hair removal study began in July 1986. The FDA cleared the device for treatment in December 1997. The FDA then granted its claim for permanent hair reduction in April 1999 after it demonstrated in a 3000 person study a better than 90% permanent hair loss after only 3 treatments.

Is hair reduction permanent?

Yes, 90% of individuals. Treatments work the most successfully on hair that is light brown to black. Blond, gray and some reds do not have enough melanin for the laser to absorb. Most clients will lose 20-30% of hair volume with each treatment. The FDA defines permanence as a hair that does not regrow after 5 cycles of growth. Hair regrows in cycles between 4-12 weeks depending on the body area.

Is there an age limit for treatments?

It is suggested that a hair have gone through puberty. All ages can benefit as long as they understand the process and potential side effects.

Who is a candidate for laser hair treatments?

Anyone who has hair that is light brown to black. The LightSheer with its patented chill tip at four degrees Celsius allows clients with any skin color to be treated safely and effectively.

How many treatments will I need?

Hair grows in continuous cycles. The anagen or growth phase of hair contains the largest amounts of melanin and this phase is the laser's target. From scientific studies we understand that any area contains a maximum of 20-30% anagen hairs at one time. So, these anagen hairs are affected each treatment. Most clients will require a minimum of three treatments up to six sessions. Repeat sessions are necessary. Hair hair and dark.

Non-invasive hair removal may require 6-8 treatments. If you suffer from a condition your treatments may be ongoing. To have treatments it is imperative that they be sequenced. client's expectations of hair loss are different. Some may be happy with 50-60% loss and may want to discontinue and others will want to continue until they reach their maximum loss of 70-95%. No one will ever be 100% hair free.

What areas can be treated?

All areas of the body except for the area around the eyes.

What should I do before my treatment?

Try to avoid sun exposure. Hair can be more aggressively treated without a fresh tan. Having hair is essential to having a successful treatment. You cannot wax, bleach, tweeze or have electrolysis for 4 weeks before a treatment. The best way to manage hair before is to shave, trim, bleach or use cream depilatories. The day of your treatment the hair will need to have been freshly shaved. If you suffer from cold sores often and are having your mouth treated you will need to get a prescription for Acyclovir or Zovirax and take as directed by your technician. Usually it is 2 days before and 3 days after your treatment. Purchase either Aloe, Vitamin E gel or sunburn creams and keep them in your fridge ready to go for after your treatment.

Why the LightSheer Diode Laser?

The LightSheer has numerous documented studies to demonstrate its efficiency. With its patented chill tip and 800 nm wavelength and ability to have a variable pulse duration to affect hair the LightSheer diode is considered the "gold standard" for hair lasers.

Does the treatment hurt?

No treatment to remove unwanted hair is completely painless. LightSheer has the patented chill tip and compression of the skin, which reduces the discomfort. The darker the hair the more the client may feel the pulse of the laser. Clients that have previously waxed or had electrolysis usually find the treatments more tolerable. Most people describe the sensation as tingling or slight stinging. The first treatment is usually the most uncomfortable. There are some options to make the treatments more comfortable. You can take whatever you normally take for a bad headache before your treatment. Analgesic that is used for toothaches can assist those having their upper lip treated. Emla® is available. It is a topical anesthetic. You can purchase it at your local pharmacy. The hair needs to be shaved first, then apply a thick layer and occlude with warm wrap. It warms the head after it has been on for a minimum of 1-2 hours. Your technician can inform you of how many tubes you will need to purchase.

What can I expect during the treatment?

The area will be cleaned. A touch up shave will be done if there is still hair visible. You will be asked to sign a consent form. Photos will be taken. Gel is applied to the skin and the laser is compressed into the skin and the treatment begins. You will not feel a distinguishable amount of the lasered hair. This is a good sign and the small will not hurt you. The skin will be cleaned frequently. After treatment a gel or cloth will be applied to your skin.

How does the laser work?

The laser targets the melanin, the pigment located in the hair bulb and shaft. The laser light energy causes thermal damage to the follicle. The damage causes delayed regrowth and permanent destruction of the hairs in anagen or growth phase.

Will tanning affect my treatment?

A tan is damage to the skin. When it is damaged it creates "tan" or color. This is "melanin" deposits in the skin. The laser is attracted to melanin. The technology in the LightSheer allows the skin to be cooled effectively to not increase the "tan" but the energy of the laser must be reduced to accommodate a tan. Therefore, the client may require more treatments than someone without a tan. To have a more effective and aggressive treatment it would be better to not have a tan.

How long do I wait between treatments?

Waiting time may vary with individuals. The general guideline is 4-6 weeks for neck and armpits areas and 6-12 weeks for areas below the neck.

What can I do with the hair in between treatments?

You should not let much hair build up. If you need to, shaving or trimming is the most effective way to maintain in between treatments.

Is it safe?

Yes. A laser is an intense source of light that produces

heat. Its target is melanin in the hair shaft. The wavelength of the LightSheer is attracted mostly to the melanin. The light is pulsed for a fraction of a second and the heat is then pulsed into the hair's matrix. The patented chill tip runs at four degrees Celsius and protects the epidermis (the outer surface of the skin).

How long will the treatment take?

This will depend on the size of the area being treated. Can take as short as 5 minutes to 2 hours. Your technician will inform you of the time required.

What about ingrown hairs?

The laser will not create ingrown hairs. If you suffer from them the laser will produce an effective treatment to clear the ingrown.

Can I wear makeup?

Yes, as long as the skin is intact. If the skin is open anywhere you must use petroleum ointment on the open spots.

When laser cannot be done:

- if you are pregnant
 - if you are on medications called Accutane
 - if you have keloids
 - if you have recently waxed, bleached or had electrolysis within the last 4 weeks
- Laser hair removal must be used with caution if you suffer from cold sores or genital herpes.

How much will the treatments cost?

Over time hair treatments have proven to be less costly than the ongoing methods such as waxing, shaving or electrolysis. A price list will be printed by the office.

Is this covered by my insurance?

Most insurance companies do not offer reimbursement for cosmetic procedures. However, consult your insurance company for more information.

Is there a guarantee that this will work?

Laser reduction works 90% of the time in most individuals. Unfortunately 10% of people may not respond at all. This cannot be determined until after 2 treatments. If you attend all sessions as suggested you should obtain 70-95% permanent hair reduction.



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Cities have financial advantages over small communities, says CAO

From Page 18

Long had previously worked as the CAO for two southwestern Ontario communities, and had worked for the provincial and federal governments prior to that.

For the past year, he was CAO for Bluewater, Ont. —

a community of about 7,000 people in Huron County, and spent the previous five years as CAO for the nearby Township of North Huron.

While Welland is a significantly larger community, Long said municipalities are facing the same issues regard-

less of their size.

But the smaller the community is, he said the harder it is to cope with those issues, such as aging infrastructure.

"The small communities are really facing a cash crunch. Their budgets are under siege," he said.

While the larger communities are struggling with the same issues, he said it's more difficult for smaller communities.

"Their ability to finance and sustain programs, services and facilities is kind of in question," he said.

Long said he was also given a warm reception from city staff, council and Mayor Frank Campion in particular.

"It's a real important relationship, the one between the mayor and the CAO," he said. "Sometimes that relationship is going to be great and other

times it's going to be a challenge. But I feel the mayor and I have established a good rapport out of the gate. I think that bodes well for what we can accomplish."

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LOCAL NEWS

Award shows delphinium's a blooming success

TERESA FORTÉ

Special to Postmedia Network

When I started gardening, I dreamed of growing six-foot tall blue and violet delphiniums. Their stately blooms graced the backs of the perennial borders in the English gardening books I'd been studying. Delphiniums were essential to a proper perennial garden.

For the first few years, our garden included sky-blue Summer Skies, deep purple Black Knight and King Arthur in shades of royal blue with white hec. They were indeed showy, but they also demanded a lot of attention: rich soil, regular feeding, several stakes and tying the stems with twine (the top-heavy plants still hie over in a storm).

After a short romance, the delphiniums disappeared and I moved on to perennials and grasses that were less demanding of my attention.

Does this mean the romance was over?

Not really. I will go out of my way to visit a beautiful and well-tended display of delphiniums. I will can't resist their tall spikes of blue, violet, white and pink flowers.

The delphinium has been named perennial of the year for 2016 by the National Garden Bureau. Let's take a closer look at this garden classic.

History

Delphinium, a native throughout the northern hemisphere, includes about 300 species in the ranunculaceae (buttercup) family. The name delphinium originated with the ancient Greeks, who thought the shape of the new flower bud with spur resembled that of a dolphin's nose.

The Pacific Giant hybrids are a popular variety today that typically grows four to six feet tall. Millennium delphinium hybrids are reportedly better in warmer, more humid climates than the Pacific hybrids.

Delphinium cultivars in production today

The most common delphiniums in commercial production are Delphinium elatum and Pacific hybrid varieties known for their long spiky stems and beautiful two-foot long flower stems. These mainly seed-propagated plants are available through garden retailers.

Delphinium Pacific hybrid varieties are slightly taller than New Millennium varieties, but very similar in growing habit and colours. Pacific Hybrids are also referred to as Pacific Giant hybrids. The most popular varieties are Black Knight, Galahad, Blue Jay, Blue Bird and King Arthur.

The Delphinium Guardian, Aurora and Magic Fountain series also offer great colours and very controlled growth. This new breeding is beginning to replace some of the older elatum hybrids on the market. Blue, purple and lavender are the most popular colours in this series.

Delphiniums in the garden

Homeowners can begin their delphiniums from seed or as a plant from a garden retailer. They are very easy to grow in the northern climates, with very little maintenance. As a perennial, they tolerate cool northern climates and overwinter with ease as a hardy perennial. Some misunderstanding about non-hardiness actually comes from hot and humid climates, which the plants cannot tolerate for long periods of time.

Culture

Delphiniums prefer a rich loam soil, that is moist but well drained, and full sun. For the showiest flowers, they will want regular feeding.

Removing the spent flower stems (deadheading) will encourage a second flowering later in the season. Taller varieties will require staking to keep them upright. Stakes should be installed in May to support the tall flower stems as they develop.

Mulching is not recommended, because it can

cause stem rot. After heavy frost, late fall early winter plants need to be cut back and cleaned up. Winter protection is not necessary, but plants can be covered with hay or leaves to protect the crowns.

This protection needs to be removed very early in spring to maintain a healthy Delphinium in the garden. In natural snow-covered areas, no extra protection is needed.

Homeowners can begin their delphiniums from seed or as a plant through your garden retailer. Growing delphiniums from seed is an investment. Tall varieties will take two years to bloom from seed. Shorter varieties will bloom in the first year from seed. Summer (26 to 32 cm tall) is well suited to containers or to tuck into the front of a border, selections include Morning (pink), Stars (white) and Nights (deep blue).

The slightly taller Magic Fountains (75 to 90 cm) are listed as wind tolerant and will also bloom the first year from seed.

Container-grown delphiniums purchased from garden retailers will often bloom the first year they are planted, if you buy an established plant. Younger potted plants are more economical — situate them in the garden and then let them establish themselves before expecting them to perform. Patience is the key.

Pests and disease

Powdery mildew, usually the result of high humidity and poor air circulation, can be a problem. The best way to get rid of this problem is by keeping the foliage as dry as possible.

Several sources recommend replacing delphiniums, perhaps even moving them to a different spot in the garden every three years, to keep the stock vigorous and prevent the spread of soil-bound disease.

Teresa Forté is a local garden communicator and photographer. You can reach her by phoning 905-351-7540 or by e-mail at teresa.forte@sympatico.ca.



TERESA M. FORTÉ / SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Delphiniums can reach 180 cm tall, shorter varieties 90 cm, each stem is packed with showy flowers in shades of purple, blue, white, pink or violet.



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LOCAL NEWS

Ash tree cleanup will be costly

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

The bark crumbled away from the trunk of the dead tree that towered above the boulevard on Woodington Place.

The exposed cambium layer was marred by curving lines etched into its surface by thousands of emerald ash borer larvae. The tree had been dead long enough that its branches were dry and brittle.

The condition of the tree was a concern for Granger Burke, who was there last week with Welland's forestry department, prepared to cut it down.

"When we drop this tree, it's going to explode," he warned.

Minutes later, after the chainsaw wielded by Paul Sodtka tore through the trunk, the tree dropped to the pavement with a violent crash as its brittle limbs shattered on impact.

It was one of thousands of dead ash trees that line city-owned boulevards of Welland's streets.

Burke said the emerald ash borers have been around "for a long, long time."

But it has taken years for the number of insects to grow

to a level at which they can cause devastation.

"Now it's like a tsunami; there are just so many bugs," Burke said. "Now the trees are really dead."

And the dead trees can pose a safety hazard to pedestrians, motorists and property.

Forestry department foreman Aurelio Magazzeni said there were initially about 2,500 dead ash trees on city boulevards, of which about 800 have been removed so far.

But that's not including untold thousands more on parkland, city-owned woodlots and the banks of the recreational canal.

While city staff have been busy with the boulevards and other priority areas, Magazzeni said the city has had to call in help to cope with the problem.

For instance, three tree removal companies were given contracts to remove more than 300 trees in Dain City late last summer, while contractors were also called in to clear dead ash trees from other parts of the city including the south end of Merritt Island near the playground.

But with thousands of trees yet to be removed, the forestry department has asked



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Paul Sodtka from Welland's forestry department trims branches from an ash tree, one of thousands killed by the emerald ash borer.

city council for the funding it needs to deal with the problem.

Council is now considering an additional \$350,000 in forestry department funding to help cover the cost of the tree

removal this year. In total, that's about \$600,000.

"That's a lot of money," Magazzeni said. "But we're in an emergency situation now."

With the funding, he hopes to first address priority areas

— particularly the remainder of Merritt Island.

"Because it's such a narrow strip of land, the trees could hit either one of the trails. The trees are 60 feet high. If anyone's walking along either the lower or upper trail, they're

going to be a target," Magazzeni said.

Parkland along the recreational canal near Notre Dame College School is another priority.

"There are lots of ash trees there and it's a hangout for kids," Magazzeni said.

Although only one tree has fallen so far, Magazzeni said the dead trees have now "reached the threshold" where they are apt to break at the trunk.

"If there's a chance that a tree could hit a pedestrian, we need to deal with it," he said.

But even if the additional funding is approved, it won't be enough to clear all of the dead ash trees from city property.

"Between our forces and that money, I think it's going to take care of a good chunk," he said. "For the canal lands though, that's a start."

On the bright side, the trees could be a windfall for residents with fireplaces.

"If you see it on the boulevard, my suggestion is knock on the door first. The homeowner has first choice. But if they don't want it, you're welcome to pick it up," Magazzeni said.

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For those of you who we may have missed we apologize but thank you for making the event so special!

